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American Legion asks VA Secretary to reverse Black Hills call

WASHINGTON (February 17, 2017) – National Commander Charles E. Schmidt of The American Legion is calling on VA Secretary David Shulkin to reverse the department’s decision made under the previous secretary to end needed services at the VA Medical Center in Hot Springs, S.D.

“The historic Black Hills VA Health Care System has saved countless lives over the years as veterans from rural areas of South Dakota, Wyoming and Nebraska have relied on this hospital for in-patient care,” Schmidt said. “Veterans who live far from metropolitan areas are already at a significant disadvantage when accessing their benefits. Relocating services to far-off facilities just compounds the problem. Dr. Shulkin is a physician who understands the importance of timely treatment and patient care. We are asking him to take quick action so VA can continue to serve these veterans who have sacrificed for their nation.”

While Hot Springs will continue to offer outpatient services, many veterans will have to travel to Rapid City in order to receive the medical care that they need. Delegates to the 2016 American Legion national convention unanimously passed a resolution reaffirming the organization’s support to keeping the facility and residential rehabilitation services in Hot Springs. The American Legion also called for the creation of a Center for Excellence to treat Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, substance abuse and homeless prevention at Hot Springs.

With a current membership of 2.2 million wartime veterans, The American Legion, www.legion.org, was founded in 1919 on the four pillars of a strong national security, veterans affairs, Americanism, and youth programs. Legionnaires work for the betterment of their communities through more than 13,000 posts across the nation.

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